



New England Agricultural Statistics Service

a field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture

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USDA MEASURES AGRICULTURAL LABOR COSTS

During the week of April 9-15 2000, there were an estimated 35,000 hired workers on Northeastern agricultural operations across New England and New York. This was 12.5 percent lower than the 40,000 workers a year earlier. These hired workers averaged 36.1 hours per week and were paid an average wage of \$8.51 per hour; the same as the previous quarter and 17 cents higher than the previous year. Nationally the average for the same period in April was \$8.12, two cents higher than the previous quarter and 29 cents higher than the previous year. Northeast field workers received an average of \$8.41 per hour; 29 cents more than the previous quarter and 23 cents above the previous year. Livestock workers averaged \$7.37 per hour; 15 cents greater than the previous quarter and three cents higher than the previous year.

With the tight labor market, there is a great interest in agricultural labor costs for the upcoming July quarter. A year ago (July 11-17, 1999), there were 48,000 workers, who averaged 36.9 hours per week, and were paid an average wage rate of \$7.86 per hour. These and other statistics are summarized from the quarterly Agricultural Labor Survey. The cost and availability of farm labor is a major component of operators' productivity and return on investment. Therefore, information about the agricultural labor force is very important to farmers, grower associations, lenders, lawmakers, and local and national agencies.

Beginning the third full week of July, the New England Agricultural Statistics Service will contact approximately 450 agricultural producers to ask for their help in a quarterly nationwide effort to measure the agricultural labor force. The information collected is used to generate statistics about the number of workers, hours worked and wage rates for Northeast farm laborers and in all other regions of the country.

"The cooperation of area farmers is essential in order to ensure that agriculture in New England is properly represented," said Aubrey Davis, Director of the New England Agricultural Statistics Service. All information about individual farms is held in strict confidence. Data is used in combination with reports from other producers to generate regional and national statistics. The producers selected to participate are mailed sample questions and a letter requesting their help in this project. Interviewers will conduct the survey through personal or telephone interviews between July 17 and 28, 2000.

The national survey results will be available in the **Farm Labor** report from Washington, D.C. on August 18, at 3:00 pm. All reports are available on the Internet within a few minutes of the scheduled release time. Northeast and U.S. statistics are re-printed in the August issue of the **Ag Review** (a monthly newsletter from the Concord field office). The **Ag Review** is available on the Internet monthly, but complimentary copies are also mailed to survey participants upon request.

[The New England Agricultural Statistics Service is a field office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. It is located in Concord, NH, and is responsible for agricultural statistics in all six states in the region. The office can be reached at 1-800-642-9571 or through e-mail at nass-nh@nass.usda.gov. All national statistics and state level newsletters are available through free e-mail subscriptions and on the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.]

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